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**M. EMILE VILLEMIN
RODIN AND HIS ART**

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EVERY DAY

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THE MENTOR

RODIN AND
HIS ART

By
M. ÉMILE VILLEMEN

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The Sculptor Magician

RODIN believed in but one inspiration—Nature. Nature could do no wrong. He swore that he did not invent, he copied nature. He despised improvisation, had contemptuous words for “fatal facility,” and, being a slow-thinking, slow-moving man, he admitted to his councils only those who had conquered art, not by assault, but by stealth and after years of hard work. He sympathized with Flaubert’s patient, toiling days. He praised Holland because, after Paris, it seemed slow. “Slowness is beauty,” he declared. In a word, he had evolved a theory and practice of his art that was the outcome—like all theories, all techniques—of his own temperament. And that temperament was giant-like, massive, ironic, grave, strangely perverse; it was the temperament of a magician of art doubled by a mathematician’s.

HIS modeling aroused tempests, either of dispraise or idolatry. To see him steadily after a visit to his studios at Paris or Meudon was difficult. If the master was present one felt the impact of a personality that was misty as the clouds about the base of a mountain, and as impressive as the bulk of a mountain. Yet a sane, pleasant, unassuming man, interested in his clay—that is, unless you happened to discover him interested in humanity. If you watched him well you might, in turn, have found yourself watched; those peering eyes possessed a vision that plunged into the depths of your soul. And this master of marble saw the soul as nude as he saw the body. It was the union in him of sculptor and psychologist that placed Rodin apart from other artists.

LOVE and life, and bitterness and death ruled the themes of his marbles. Like Beethoven and Wagner, he broke academic rules, for he was Auguste Rodin, and where he magnificently achieved, lesser men failed or fumbled. His large, tumultuous music was alone for his chisel to ring out and to sing.

From “Rodin, the Man and His Art,” The Century Company, New York.

RODIN AND HIS ART

By M. ÉMILE VILLEMIN

Written in French for The Mentor, and translated by Esther Singleton

MENTOR

GRAVURES

AUGUSTE RODIN

RODIN'S STUDIO,
MEUDON, FRANCE

THE THINKER

AUGUSTE RODIN

Photographed at his home, Hôtel Biron, Paris,
France

"Pierres, pure et belle matière pour le travail des hommes, comme le lin est pour le travail des femmes présents à peine voilés sous la terre, que l'homme a saisis avec transport, a retirés de l'ombre, tout tendres, pour les lancer dans l'air, en ériger des clochers, les rendre maniables et les apprivoiser pour les chefs d'œuvre; moins durs que les sauvages rochers! Les plus dures et les plus douces aiment l'homme. La sculpture les a magnifiées."

AUGUSTE RODIN

MENTOR

GRAVURES

THE ADIEU

LA PENSÉE
(Contemplation)

BUST OF COUNTESS
OF W.

"Stones, pure and beautiful material for man's work—as linen is for the work of women—gifts nearly veiled by the ground, have been seized by man with ecstasy; and he has drawn them from the earth to raise them upward into the air, fashioning them into towers and subjecting them to control for the creation of masterpieces almost as enduring as the rocks. The hardest and the softest of them love man: for his sculpture has glorified them."

TRANSLATION

RODIN! What a majestic figure the name calls up! How many contests, arguments, and passions are unchained at the mere mention of his name! How many controversies, prejudices, errors, misunderstandings, and even falsehoods, regarding his art have been circulated in the world of artists, amateurs, and, more especially, the uninformed public! And yet, on the other hand, what emotions, what transports, what enthusiasm and what sensations of refinement has this creative genius inspired! To speak of Rodin is to recall a whole period of artistic effervescence,

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rich in teaching of many kinds, and very precious to the world in its wonderful results.

Like every other truly original artist, Rodin was at first misunderstood; and, indeed, it was with difficulty that a few enthusiasts discovered in his first attempts that undefinable charm which became definite only at a later period, after this daring innovator's perseverance had triumphed over the ostracism of which he had so long been a victim.

Early Years

Born of a simple family and without fortune, young Rodin was compelled at an early age to make a place for himself. He entered the *École des Arts Décoratifs* (School of Decorative Arts), in Paris, where his taste for drawing asserted itself. Then it was that he began that long and obstinate study which nothing ever interrupted and which finally led him to success.

When he was about seventeen, believing himself ripe for the *École des Beaux Arts* (School of Fine Arts), he presented himself at the *concours* (contest); but he was pitilessly refused because "he did not know how to draw." Three times he repeated his attempt and three times he was rejected. These successive checks would have discouraged any one less well-tempered; but Rodin persevered and conquered, for he felt himself impelled by an invincible force.

In his rare moments of leisure, Rodin began to work for himself and to prepare a piece for the *Salon*. This was the "Man with the Broken Nose," considered a perfect masterpiece today. We are now, however, in 1864, and Rodin is but twenty-four. When the members of the jury came to examine the work of the *débutant*, all were stupefied: What could that "horror" mean that was submitted to their sober judgment? Was some one making fun of them? What did the common face, disfigured by a deformity, mean? Evidently a joke! They must refuse, and without further examination, such an aberration, and, moreover, give a severe lesson to the dangerous lunatic.

Rodin was not in the least disturbed over his rebuff; he knew he had only to wait a little.

When Rodin reappeared at the *Salon* it was with another master-

RODIN'S HOUSE AND STUDIO AT MEUDON, FRANCE

RODIN'S HOME, HÔTEL BIRON, PARIS, FRANCE

RODIN AT WORK

piece—"The Age of Bronze," a bold and magnificent conception which astonished his detractors and won the admiration of *connoisseurs*; for those high personal qualities of Rodin, already revealed in the "Man with the Broken Nose," were manifested in this new creation and in a manner so intense that it was impossible ever again to challenge the genius of this master.

Some critics carefully insinuated that the artist had manifestly taken a cast of this subject, because he could not have given it such vitality by any other means. This perfidy was spread far and wide and occasioned interminable discussions, which, far from harming Rodin's reputation, on the contrary, called attention to his great creative power.

Now, everybody was compelled to make a choice—there was no alternative—"are you *for*, or *against*, the art of Rodin?" The question accounts for the turmoil that was produced by each new production.

The artist himself remained calm in the midst of all the noise: undisturbed, he continued to study Nature and to reproduce her in all her truth and splendor.

The Art of Rodin

Those that try to analyze the genius of Rodin often take a wrong road because they make comparisons and bring the style of his work into relation with the styles of other masters who are known and classified. This mistake is frequently made; but it may easily be avoided if we remember that the art of Rodin is essentially original and personal and does not lend itself to any comparisons whatsoever. It is more logical, and much more profitable, to content ourselves with an examination of the constructive elements of his genius.

What strikes us at first when we examine a work by Rodin, such as "The Thinker," for example, is the *movement* which determines the intense life of the personage. We get the impression that the artist has, first of all, wished to establish a communion of existence between the spectator and the subject, so as to force the interest of the former upon the latter. This movement is obtained by the high qualities of the master's drawing—qualities that are found in all the great exponents of sculpture and painting, such as Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian (tish'-an), for example, and also in the sculpture of Greece.

The second characteristic that unfolds itself is that of a masterly thought which the artist has conceived and which he has wished to express in an attitude, a gesture, a physiognomy, or, sometimes, in a simple glance. His "Dalou," his "Victor Hugo" and his "Balzac" show this characteristic in luminous fashion, as do, in fact, all the conceptions of his brain. This dominant trait is so judiciously expressed that the intelligence of the spectator perceives it without any effort: it seems to penetrate into him as soon as the work appears before his eyes, and to become stronger and stronger, in proportion as his gaze remains fixed. We should remark that, in order to obtain this striking effect, Rodin had recourse, as a general rule, to no attribute, or accessory, that might aid the spectator's judgment. He seems to have considered everything apart from the one dominant idea of his subject as trickery.

When we examine "The Burghers of Calais," the "Gate of Hell," "The Tempest" and "Bellona"—and, indeed, all of his characteristic works—we cannot find that Rodin felt

PORTRAIT BUST OF RODIN
By the sculptor Soubaine

In the Luxembourg Gallery
MAN WITH THE BROKEN NOSE

any concern about enlightening our beliefs, other than by the intensity of the expression, that sublime product of his fertile imagination, and by his prodigious talent for composition. Rodin considered himself to have a religious nature, and took the ground that all artists are temperamentally religious.

If, on the one hand, Rodin seems to care so little for pleasing the masses, and if his art is addressed only to those who seem to him worthy to understand it and who can enter into his views, on the other hand he is of that race of great imitators who count upon time to educate the ignorant, and who rest content if they are not wholly misunderstood, and if they can gain the approbation of a few highly cultured persons, waiting for the time when their genius will compel general admiration.

In the Luxembourg Gallery
THE AGE OF BRONZE
Depicting Man awakening to
Nature

Rodin's Temperament

To appreciate thoroughly the third element of Rodin's aestheticism, it is well to understand the temperament of the Master, which was composed of tenderness and sensibility mingled with passion, fire and sensuality,—all valuable and precious things in art; for the artist naturally impresses upon his works the manifestations of his temperament. The works of artists who do not possess these elements are cold and dry.

Rodin expresses very marvelously the voluptuous sensibility of Love, to which he adds the supple grace of the body, the lines of which he studied with passion. He kept in his most ardent expressions a chaste reserve, which the dignity of his art demanded; but the one idea that never abandoned him—that of giving life to

his personages above all else—led him naturally to an alluring realism which produces a happy contrast with the wild energy of the greater number of his other works. "The Kiss," "The Muse and the Poet," "The Female Faun," "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Eternal Idol" are exquisite pieces in this class of ideas. We must also draw attention to that delicate idea of the "Young Mother," to "Brother and Sister," to "Adolescence," to "The Poet and the Muses," and several others.

The Part That Light Plays

This last characteristic is one of the most powerful elements of Rodin's expres-

HEAD OF THE AGE OF BRONZE

sive force—it is the part that light has in his works. Rodin is among those artists who have best understood the rôle that light plays in the plastic arts. In this respect he may be compared to Rembrandt; the methods of these two great geniuses are very much the same.

Who does not recall the criticism addressed to Rembrandt upon his habit of directing a luminous ray upon a certain point of his picture, so that the attention of the spectator was concentrated on the essential part of the subject at the expense of the rest of the composition, which the artist seemed to disdain? The same criticisms were directed against Rodin a hundred times over!

Why, critics asked, give so much care to a certain part of a subject, and leave the rest in the condition of a sketch? Why, above all, did Rodin not bring his subject out of the stone, preferring to show, most frequently, only one side of a person in *demi-relief*—indeed, almost in *bas-relief*? Why, finally, leave the statue in a brutal state, with a great part of the block uncompleted?

Rodin never took the trouble to reply to these remarks, which he considered as idle and vain. He contented himself with proclaiming a truth which was dear to him—“*Le fini tue la vitalité*” (“Finish kills vitality”).

And, indeed, this principle is confirmed in a number of works of art, and, particularly, in architectural decoration. Did not Hourticq wisely say: “It is not sufficient to admire architecture, nor even to understand it well in order to resuscitate it. The Gothic *pastiches* (imitations), that have succeeded the best, are of an extreme coldness. The modern builder brings to his task classical habits, uniformity of plan, symmetry, and neatness of design; as well as rigorous regularity, which determines the form of the edifice in all its details and division of labor, which makes of the architect a mere designer on paper and of the workman a mere stonecutter. In old

STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO

HEAD OF THE BALZAC STATUE

STATUE OF BALZAC

This extraordinary work created a storm of criticism, some critics pronouncing it a grotesque caricature and an insult to Art and to Balzac

cathedrals the *stone sculpture* lives everywhere: the work is varied, rich, and surprising. Modern copies are constrained: the dry geometry of our architects cannot regain the soul of the Gothic cathedrals."

This wandering soul Rodin found again: his "Burghers of Calais" and his "Gate of Hell" reveal it in its entirety.

To conventional finish, which Rodin rejected with much energy, he opposed his remarkable exploitation of light, which he employed for two ends. The first was to attract the eye of the spectator towards the essential point of the subject,—a point treated with passion, where his thought was concentrated with all the power of his chisel. Why should he need to explain and finish the other parts of the block when the poem of the stone was achieved, when there remained nothing more to express in his chosen theme? To work more upon the visible field would be to spoil the spirit of condensation which is the very essence of Rodin's genius.

Secondly, light plays a preponderant part in the work of Rodin; and light contributes splendidly to the realization of a favorite expression of his: "*La vie avant tout*" ("Life before everything"). We may cite at hazard any work of Rodin, as we may cite at hazard any work of Rembrandt, and find this genial trait everywhere, and in the same degree.

Rodin's Writings

After having considered the characteristics of Rodin's genius, it is appropriate to speak of his writings, which so well reflect his majestic personality.

Poet superb, powerful interpreter of nature, which he penetrated with such an incomparable mastery, Rodin owed it to himself to translate his ideas and his aesthetic principles into writing. Little prepared at first for the rôle of writer, he soon initiated himself into the resourcefulness of the pen. In the midst of his inces-

PORTRAIT BUST OF VICTOR HUGO

sant labor, interrupted only by the evening, during which he feverishly awaited the return of the fructifying light, he filled many of these somber hours by writing of that art which claimed his attention without intermission.

"The Cathedral" preserves in a concrete manner the ideas expressed hundreds of times by this inspired poet in stone. There we find again, under forms of ingenious images, original "figures of speech" and happy comparisons, those sublime principles upon which all the art of Rodin rests. The vigorous and rapid sketches that accompany these reflections of the master complete his demonstrations marvelously.

The language that Rodin writes is most seductive. We always feel the sensibility of the poet and the lover, and his unreserved admiration for the great classics of Greece—"that land of sculpture, the only one without alloy."

Rodin's writings attest the abundance of his thought, the fertility of his imagination, and his profound knowledge of all the elements of art. They breathe the enthusiasm and the belief in ideal beauty that sustained the artist during his hard career and that procured for him the purest pleasures.

His Career Crowned

If we wish to draw certain conclusions from

the laborious career of Rodin, and from the stupendous re-

nown that this great artist acquired, we might say that no one better than Rodin exhibits the evolution of a genius, that, ignorant of itself at first, gradually became conscious of its force and developed itself through all the vicissitudes of life, and despite all obstacles. Rodin experienced the saddest hours of artist life, as he experienced its most brilliant triumphs. Before installing himself in that charming Villa de Meudon, where he now reposes forever, this indefatigable fighter knew the hardest struggles—like a soldier who is arrested by no danger and who sees only the final victory. Rodin possessed within himself a flame of genius that, sustained

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL
A work of Rodin's youth

REPRESENTATION OF FRANCE
In the Monument to Champlain. Photographed
in Rodin's Studio

PORTRAIT OF MADAME MORLA VICUNHA

by an unalterable tenacity, kept up his enthusiasm, and led on to success.

Alone, poor, and hampered by the material needs of life, his one dream was to acquire such technical knowledge as was necessary to bring out, in their full value, the treasures of art that he felt were within himself. Far from being discouraged by his first rebuffs, he drew from them a new strength that fortified him ever more and more and conducted him slowly but surely forward.

Once in the light of fame, his personality declared itself, uncontested. The world gave him adulation and offered him incense, as if, indeed, repentant of having once misunderstood him. His most bitter adver-

saries capitulated and sought his friendship, and those that had hesitated about accepting his theories became his warmest partisans.

Before this revolution of opinion, which had been effected by his creative power alone, Rodin remained calm, not because he wished to show disdain for his legitimate triumph, but because his artistic nature, absorbed by ideals and solicitous before all else to accomplish his work, had no other ambition than the satisfaction of having, so to speak, carved stone to his implacable will.

Rewarded by universal popularity, honored by the nation in a magnificent manner, Rodin enjoyed full glory during the last twenty years of his life. Like Voltaire, he assisted at his own living apotheosis. His colossal work, housed in great part in the delightful Hôtel Biron, now become a *Musée d'État* (National Museum), has definitely consecrated his fame: he is celebrated forever, without dispute.

Rodin's Influence

What will be the influence of Rodin upon the art of the future? Will he found a school? His method—will it be taught? Questions difficult to answer.

We think that the very personal

PERISTYLE OF THE STUDIO AT MEUDON

art of Rodin will not permit of imitation. Already several young workers have tried to imitate it and their attempts have not been happy. Imitation goes beyond the original, and accents imperfections far more frequently than it concerns itself with the fine qualities. The personality of a true artist comes from his own genius and cannot be transmitted. It would be better, we think, if the disciple tried to create for himself, at the side of his master, instead of endeavoring to wear his master's sandals.

Do we, therefore, mean to say that nothing is to be taken from the heritage of an innovator? Certainly not. The point is to discern intelligently what may be profitable to art, and to avoid all that would be mere servile imitation.

Considering him whom people will call in the future "*le grand Rodin*" (the great Rodin), many elements of his genius will be profitable for the generations of artists that are to succeed him, from the point of view of art in general and the technic of sculpture in particular:

1. His dominating idea to give *life* to his subjects.
2. His imperious desire to express a masterly thought without recourse to accessories that would only weaken his creative power.
3. His wish to impress the spectator by the attitude and the sense of movement.

PORTRAIT BUST OF BERNARD SHAW

THE VILLAGE FIANCÉE

4. His facility in creating, turn by turn, strength, energy, grace and delicacy, and to render, with an equal mastery, the entire scale of human sentiment, from terror and anger to tenderness and voluptuousness.

5. A prodigious knowledge of composition due to an ardent imagination always at work.

6. His skilfulness as a draughtsman, which, with the examples before him of the great geniuses of antiquity and of the Renaissance, enabled him to realize his mighty conceptions.

These many faculties, united in a single brain, made of the artist that possessed them one of the greatest figures in art. It is no exaggeration to characterize Rodin as one of the supreme geniuses in whom France takes pride.

ÉMILE VILLEMIN

Rodin's Art Personality

Rodin had so impressed his personality upon the imagination of his contemporaries that, if all his works had been destroyed, he would still have left a deep mark upon the period. The idea may be expressed in another way by comparing him with Tolstoy. Each was a personage and stood for a type and an attitude toward life. Tolstoy distrusted beauty and taught repression of the natural impulses. Rodin worshiped nature, finding no evil therein; and to him, free utterance was of the essence of life and art.

In his later phase, the great sculptor had been identified by many only with certain daring modern tendencies, away from actual representation in art. Too often it has been overlooked that he never gave up his allegiance to ancient Greece. He began his artistic life by a severe apprenticeship in carving the humbler kinds of architectural ornaments. In such work as the much discussed "Balzac" he carried modification a long way, but undoubtedly the forms of nature were always at the basis of everything in his own mind.

ADOLESCENCE

An exquisitely poetic expression of the beauty of childhood

It is fortunate that Rodin's collection of his own works and of the antiques he had acquired was given to France by the sculptor before his death. When a petty argument arose in the Chamber of Deputies over the acceptance of the gift, one of the speakers that favored it remarked that it would be absurd for his own nation to refuse his works when the United States had a "Rodin Gallery" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

An American, George Hellman, was one of the first to call attention to the interest of the sculptor's drawings. American painters and photographers have made some of the best portraits of the man. He undoubtedly formed one of the intellectual and artistic ties between the French and American nations.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

RODIN, THE MAN AND HIS ART. With Leaves from his "Note-Books." Compiled by Judith Cladel, and translated by S. K. Star. With Introduction by James Huneker, and illustrated with many photographs.

T H E O P E N L E T T E R

In a letter in the day's mail I find the question, "What is meant by Individuality in Art?" In the present number of *The Mentor* the answer to the question may be found. Rodin was the living embodiment of individualism. "Individuality in Art" is the same as individuality in everything else. It is the quality or qualities that make a man singular, and distinct from his fellow men. If we accept that definition, however, in its widest meaning, an insane man or a fanatic is an individualist. So he is. But he does not engage our sympathetic interest, or our support—only our pity. The recognition, acceptance and appreciation of one's fellow men establish and canonize one's individuality. Without the acceptance and appreciation of the world, the qualities that make individualism go into nature's discard.

★ ★ ★

In art, individualism means a distinct point of view and manner of expressing one's self. "In this age of individualism," says Professor John C. Van Dyke, "almost every artist originates a style of his own, and the correctness or incorrectness of it is very much dependent upon whether it pleases or not." When we use the word "style" we mean that which, in a large sense, shows the character and particular "mental and moral bent" of the man behind the brush or chisel. For instance, there is the grand style of Michelangelo, the exalted, spiritual style of Raphael, the classic style of David (dah-veed), the poetic, pastoral style of Corot (kor-roé), and the vital style of Rodin's utterance in stone. In art, extremes in individuality are to be found, both to be appreciated and admired. Some painters spend weeks painting the texture of a dress; Goya, the Spaniard, did it, apparently, "in a second, with a single downward dash of the brush." Some work out a portrait with careful pains, so that every detail shall be in evidence: Rembrandt made the essential parts of a portrait live in brilliant flashes, and let the rest go. Many sculptors carve, and smooth, and

"tickle" their surfaces to a fine, "finicky" finish: Rodin cut the vital part of his creation out of the marble, and left the rest of the stone, a mute appeal to our imagination.

★ ★ ★

If you would know what "Individualism in Art" is, judge every artist by his own particular methods, and look especially for the artist's meaning. Ask yourself: "What does art mean to him, what is his own individual message, and how has he expressed it?" Do not find fault with one artist because he has not expressed himself the way another might. Decide simply whether his idea is a fine one, worthy of art, and whether he has made it clear in a worthy style. Look for that quality in art which, as Professor Van Dyke says, "You will feel whether you will or no—the *individuality* of the artist. No two artists are precisely the same; some we like and some we dislike, and the reason is simply that their individuality is pleasing or displeasing to us. The individual is peculiarly constituted with certain faculties, powers, emotions, motives; and his thoughts, moods, deeds, expressions are modified by his peculiar make-up. In some cases these conditions make the eccentric man, in others the individual man. And somewhat of the man, whatsoever he may be, finds its way into his work and tinctures the whole. This is individuality, and when in art it is so strong that it commands us, it is sometimes called genius."

★ ★ ★

Rodin was a granite-ribbed mountain in the world of art. The critics of his time demanded that the mountain come to them and level his abrupt summits to the accepted planes of art topography. But this he would not do. He persisted in thrusting his rugged steepes to the sky till the world stood in wondering admiration. Then the critics, like Mahomet, finding that the mountain would not come to them, surrendered and went to the mountain.

W.D. Moffat
EDITOR

"In art, to admit only that which one comprehends leads to impotence. Nature is full of unknown forces."—*Auguste Rodin*.

RODIN was not only a great emotional sculptor: he was a great intellectual force,—a rushing human tornado, if you will, that swept into and through the artistic world with a power almost terrifying, to clear the atmosphere, and to render not only his chosen form of expression—sculpture—pure and inspired as it was in the

days of the Greeks; but to quicken and revive all other expressions of art. Every maker of beautiful things—in form, in color, and in words—has a clearer and a bigger idea of art in general and of his own art in particular because of Rodin. Therefore, it behooves all thinkers and educated persons to learn something of his life and to study his art, his theories, and his writings.

François Auguste Rodin was born in Paris, November 12, 1840, of very poor parents. At the age of fourteen he decided to become an artist, his gift for drawing being extraordinary. He entered the *Petite École* (The Free School of Design), in the old *Rue de l'École de Médecine*, and here one day he joined the modeling-class.

He immediately began to study the antique. Working in clay was a revelation: Rodin became obsessed with the pleasure of manipulating the soft material. He had found his true path!

Even at this early age Rodin was an indefatigable worker. At seventeen he had finished his first studies and was ready for the *École des Beaux Arts*. He began to prepare himself for examinations so that he might compete for the coveted *Prix de Rome*—the prize that gives to its lucky winner free study in the Eternal City.

Rodin was rejected! He was now eighteen, and without means. He was forced to gain money in any way he could. Once he mixed drugs for an apothecary. After a time he became a journeyman ornament-worker; and he was quick to get such help and encouragement as possible from the sculptor for whom he occasionally worked. At twenty-three he entered the studio of the fashionable sculptor Carrier-Belleuse, and executed many statuettes and figures for him. In any way and every way he could, he earned his daily pittance, never dreaming that the future would bring him enormous fortune and great renown. During this period Rodin sometimes had the privilege of criticism from Barye, the great animal-sculptor. Impressed by the face of an old shepherd, flat-nosed and anguished by the experiences of life, Rodin modeled the "Man with the Broken Nose," which he cast in plaster and sent to the Salon of 1864. It mystified the jury and was rejected. The work is now considered a masterpiece.

Rodin was in Paris during the Franco-German War of 1870, after which he lived in Brussels and Antwerp. He worked diligently in these cities, while Rosa, afterward his wife, did the housework, posed for him, helped moisten his clay, and was, as she proudly said, his "*garçon d'atelier*" (gar-song da-tel-ee-ay) (studio-boy). At this period Rodin also painted many landscapes in oil and modeled from a young Belgian soldier "The Bronze Age," or "The Man Who Awakens to Nature," over which he worked for eighteen months. It was a creation. The plaster model appeared in the Salon of 1877 and attracted much attention. It was so true to life that some critics declared it to be a cast! In 1875 Rodin traveled to Italy, and in 1877 made a tour through France. The rest of his life was uneventful as far as action was concerned. Fortune lavished her favor upon him, and he put forth masterpiece after masterpiece. His two homes became famous. The Hôtel Biron in Paris and the Villa Maudon in the Valley of the Marne attracted visitors and students from far and near, not only to see the work of the Master, but to come in contact with his marvelous personality.

It was after the Exposition of 1900, when Rodin's works were shown in a pavilion in the *Place de l'Alma*, that his enormous vogue began. After the Exposition was over, this pavilion was recreated in the garden at Meudon and filled with masterpieces. It has been visited by hundreds of art-lovers of Europe and the United States. And sovereigns, too, went there to honor the great sculptor.

On the death of Whistler, Rodin was made president of the International Society of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers. Oxford University gave him a degree. When the war of 1914 broke out, Rodin was in his villa at Meudon. He fled to England, accompanied by his wife. The Battle of the Marne saved the museum at Meudon, as it saved the whole of France. Five years before his death, which took place at Meudon, November 17, 1917, Rodin offered his home and treasures to the French nation, and in 1916 the Chamber of Deputies voted to accept the gift. The Hôtel Biron, with its works by Rodin and its art treasures, was formally turned over to the French nation. It is valued at \$400,000.

SITUATED IN FRONT OF THE PANTHEON, PARIS

THE THINKER. BY RODIN

"The great things in life are not the exceptional things, but the beauties of every day which we do not stop to notice. These vast treasures, within our grasp, which we do not even touch, are the things that count."—*Auguste Rodin.*

ALTHOUGH fond of his friends, Rodin was a recluse. He never went into society; he attended no great functions; he never permitted himself to be "lionized." In his early life and middle years he was painfully shy, he even used to blush when spoken to; but later, when conscious of his power and renown, his timidity

disappeared and Rodin became a ready talker.

The Rodin that one thinks of is the Rodin of later years, Rodin in the culmination of his power and in the full light of glory. No artist—unless it was Rubens—ever had such wealth and honor poured upon him by the capricious goddess Fortune.

To the average person, Rodin seemed ordinary in appearance, being of medium height, with broad shoulders and large limbs. He was heavy and thick-set. Those who observed deeper noticed his magnificent head, with its intellectual forehead—truly the frontispiece of a massive brain—a full, snowy beard, and wonderful eyes of gray-blue, very piercing in their gaze and very brilliant in their ardent fire. Rodin's was the head of the Olympian Jove; indeed, he was of the race of the gods himself. There was something elemental and remote in his very simple but strong personality. If his hand was that of a creator, so was his mighty brain. Rodin's mind sought great things. He was a passionate reader all his life. He absorbed the Greek poets and dramatists, the Roman historians, Shakespeare, Dante, Victor Hugo, and Baudelaire. He joyed in the Gothic cathedrals and their sculptors and in the Renaissance architects and sculptors, as he joyed in ancient Greek sculpture and architecture; for he found his way through all great things to the fount of Nature. There lies the secret of Rodin's greatness. He went straight to Nature herself: in the firmament of heaven and in the tiniest flower in his garden he sought and found the spirit of truth and the spirit of beauty. All of his writings speak of Nature's teachings. "It is not *photographic* truth, but *living* truth, that we must seek in art," was one of his axioms.

"Judged by his work," writes a French critic, "Auguste Rodin is the most modern of artists; judged by his life and character he is unquestionably a man of bygone days. As a sculptor, he is such as were Phidias (fid'-ee-as), Praxiteles (praks-it'-e-leez) and the master-architects of the Middle Ages,—that is to say, he is of all times. One single idea guides his thoughts, one single aim arouses his

energies—*Art through the study of Nature.*

"It is by the concentration of his unusual mind on a single purpose that he attains his remarkable understanding of man, physical and moral, and of the spirit of our age. In the life-like features of his statues he inscribed the history of the day. They seem to live, and the potency of their life enters into us and dominates us. Through this secret of genius his statues and groups have an individual charm. They have taken their place in the history of sculpture. There is the charm of the unique, the charm of the Gothic and the charm of Michelangelo. There is also the charm of Rodin."

This charm is due to the poetry in Rodin's nature; for Rodin was a poet who expressed himself in marble. Take such a work as the "Danaide," for instance, a nymph of the woods crumpling herself up to sink into the hollow trunk of a tree; take the lovely "Spring"; take the wild visage of the tigerish "Tempest," breathing passion and fury; take the beautiful face of the "Village Fiancée," with downcast eyes and veiled lids, and tender, deep shadows produced by the rustic cap,—a face as gentle as a portrait by Greuze; take the noble "Minerva," with her serene smile of wisdom, her casque and her armor so decorative with its encircling serpents (emblems of wisdom and eternity)—take any one of these, look at it carefully, and then deny if you can that Rodin was a great poet? Listen to Rodin himself:

"Man has had his part, an ephemeral part, in the creation. His idea strives with the works of God as Israel strove with the angel. His illuminating thought, expressed in stone, arouses those who would otherwise be insensible to beauty. The hand of man, like the hand of God, can transform a soul and make it new.

"O Mystery, in which I have lived, I understand you now that I am about to depart! The marvel of it all! And to think that one must leave it!

"Are not the thoughts of God expressed all the world over? Are they not the fruitful germs now growing within a brain, now in a beautiful grouping of stone, now captured by those magicians, the poets? And the sculptors, are they not poets, too?"

"Man disregards that which he already has and longs for something else. He longs for swiftness,—to 'have wings like a bird.' He does not know that he already enjoys this pleasure of moving through space. He rejoices in it in his soul, which takes wing and goes where it pleases, through the sky, on the waters, to the depths of the forests."—*Auguste Rodin.*

HE Parisian home of Rodin was the Hôtel Biron (bee-rong), now a museum for Rodin's works. It is situated in the old Quartier des Invalides (kar-tee-ay daze in-val-eed), and was the residence of the Duc de Biron in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was transformed into a religious school, or convent,

where the daughters of the aristocracy were educated. The house was about to be torn down, when Rodin interposed and saved it. The Hôtel Biron stands at the end of the rue de Varenne, in the Faubourg St. Germain, a very aristocratic portion of Paris, full of handsome old mansions belonging to families associated with the history of France.

The Hôtel Biron is large, simple, and built on the lines of an elongated square. Its great charm is due to its fine proportions and to the grace and variety of its tall windows—some straight, some rounded, and some surmounted by ornaments. The spacious vestibule is paved with black and white marble, and six strong columns support the ceiling. There is a stone staircase. All is in the style of Louis XV. The northern side of the Hôtel, which passers-by see, is rather severe, and half-hidden behind the tall convent wall; the other side, facing the terrace and garden, is meant for friends, and is gayer in feeling. It is decorated with delightful stone ornamentation, and graceful windows with semicircular transoms.

Let us follow a friendly guide, who says: "To ring the bell one must reach high. The door swings open slowly. It is a portal that a coach could pass through! I knock at the door of the studio, and pass through two large rooms containing no furniture, only busts of bronze and groups of marble. When I enter this studio, Rodin is not here; I glance about. All the details of this room are familiar to me, but they always seem new, because everything is in harmony here.

"It is a lovely spring morning. The bright light falls on the various antiquities that Rodin has collected: Empire chairs with faded velvet coverings; and a Louis XIV arm-chair of gilded wood and cherry-colored silk, in which one might fancy Molière seating himself to chat with Rodin.

"On a round table there is a rich Persian material, and here stand several Japanese vases that are filled with tulips and anemones. On the mantelpiece are some Oriental bronzes and a blue and white porcelain statuette that Rodin calls his 'Chinese Virgin.' On the walls hang many of Rodin's water-colors. On ped-

estals, here and there, huge bronze busts call to mind warriors of the Middle Ages, and there are also many unfinished groups of white-marble that look as soft as snow in the golden sunlight.

"On this table, where Rodin takes his meals and writes, is also a Greek marble—a little torso, without arms or legs. It is his latest passion.

"I enter the garden, where Rodin is enjoying a moment of rest. Owing to his habits as a good workman, he rises at five o'clock every morning.

"I pass through one of the big doors, opening into the park. The beautiful view always captivates me anew. The light, the air, the expanse of sky, the groups of magnificent trees, this rustic solitude in the heart of Paris, take me by surprise and inspire and elevate my spirit. Rodin is here, smiling and in good humor.

"We stand on the terrace overlooking the slanting expanse of green lawn. Below extends a broad walk, almost an avenue, carpeted with grass and moss, and losing itself in the distant wood. Fruit-trees make lovely screens on both sides of this walk.

"The grandeur of this park is due largely to the age of the trees. When I step to the balustrade of the terrace I see on the right the golden dome of the Invalides standing out alone against the sky.

"Let us go to work," says Rodin, and we return to the room of the statues. Rodin begins to draw. In a little while he will model. During his hasty luncheon he has the little Greek torso placed before him, and he makes notes all the while."

Rodin's other home was a charming villa at Meudon, a suburb of Paris, in the Valley of the Marne. Here Rodin relaxed and enjoyed his friends. The garden at Meudon was famous, for here the great sculptor placed rare and antique sculpture among the trees and arbors and on the knolls and open lawns with such an extraordinary appreciation of the effect of the changing light upon them that the result was poetic charm. Many visitors sought admittance.

After the battle of the Marne, Rodin returned to Meudon and took up his work again. Here he died, while awaiting the dawn of peace, which he was not destined to see.

"Comprehension is like a divine ladder. Only he who has reached the top rounds has a view of the world."—*Auguste Rodin.*

UGUSTE RODIN was a deep thinker. Great ideas inspired his chisel, which he often dropped for the pen. He grasped the principles of the fine sculptors of Greece and of the Renaissance, and he penetrated the secrets of nature. His mind was both analytical and contemplative. He read the works of the greatest think-

ers of all ages—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and refreshed and invigorated by such sources of strength, he produced masterpiece after masterpiece. Rodin regarded himself as an outcome of the national strength—a part of the French nation, one in whom the soul of the race lived to put forth artistic principles and to teach a lesson in tenacity of purpose and in the value of unremitting labor. "My principles," he said, "are the laws of experience."

"We must listen to Rodin," an admirer writes, "as we would listen to Michelangelo or Rembrandt if they were living. For his method may be the starting point of an artistic renaissance in Europe, perhaps, indeed, throughout the artistic world."

We may find his message in his writings on art and nature, "Gothic Cathedrals," "Flowers," and in his "Note-Books"; for in words, as well as in stone, the poet, the artist, the thinker speaks.

"Art alone gives happiness," Rodin once remarked. "And I call Art the study of nature, the perpetual communion with her through the spirit of analysis." Again he says; "words are nothing; the deed alone counts. It is not by reading manuals on aesthetics, but by leaning on nature herself, that the artist discovers and expresses beauty."

Again; "what is beautiful in a landscape and in architecture as well, is air—space. Nobody today realizes the power of *depth*. It is this quality of depth that carries the soul where it wishes to go."

The depths of the firmament, the quivering light, fleeting shadows, undulating lights, form and luminous glories of color in sky and cloud and flowers gave Rodin intense delight, and, with mind inspired by these noble joys, the trained hand of the great sculptor was enabled to create a peculiar seductive vapor and flow and luminous quality that no other sculptor, ancient or modern, had ever thought of doing. Not only do beautiful gleams appear on the human body, but there is often a mysterious lightness in the unfinished parts of the block from which the figure issues, or is half revealed, that suggests tossing foam, or a bank of snow. This is new and strange in sculpture.

Read the description of sunset in the

garden of the Hôtel Biron, and learn how the sculptor loved color: "The hour passes quickly, but it could not be better employed than in absorbing these marvels. As the sun drops behind the horizon with its glowing color, like the flaming fires of a forge, our hearts are full of wonder and awe. It gilds all in a last golden glory of triumph. There, where the sun has now disappeared, the sky has become orange. Everything is fading—another immensity spreads out before us: the glory of night is about to throw its melancholy charm over the firmament."

"I am overwhelmed by the fluid that we call life. I am in touch with life. What more can I want? This tenderness, which surrounds me everywhere, this ever-varying nature which says so much to me, this atmosphere which envelops me—am I already in heaven, or am I a poet?"

Such a mental force was bound to be recognized. Even before Rodin's death, a compatriot wrote:

"We ought to love in Rodin this intellectual vigor that skirts the borders of the impossible. In courage it is an inspiration, a source of restfulness and a point from which we can start out afresh, fortified and charged with vitality, to the conquest of knowledge or to the realization of our own talents. Rodin's refreshing and inspiring mind partly accounts for the tremendous influence that the illustrious sculptor has exercised over the minds of artists for thirty years. We feel that the fount of strength condensed in his virile soul comes from something deeper than his personality alone; it comes from the very depths of the national strength. The convictions, the determination and the energy of Rodin are those of the workman who knows his trade, of the laborer who is impassioned by the culture of his own soil. This endurance is the foundation of the French temperament. The present events of the war have proved what this temperament is. When a country possesses such individualities through the course of history, the roads of the future open out before it brilliant with hope, notwithstanding passing shadows, and promise the greatest surprises."

Rodin was truly one of those mighty geniuses that walk alone—of the race of the gods, a dweller on Olympus!

COURTESY OF THE CENTURY CO., N. Y.

BUST OF COUNTESS OF W. BY RODIN

"No man has a heart pure enough to interpret the freshness of flowers. We cannot give expression to this freshness: it is beyond us. When it sheds its petals the flower seems to disrobe and go to sleep in the earth. This is its last act of grace, showing its submission to God."—*Auguste Rodin*.

THE principles of art were first pointed out to me," said Rodin, "not by a celebrated sculptor or by a teacher of authority, but by a fellow-workman, an humble artisan, a little plasterer from the neighborhood of Blois (blwah). His name was Constant Simon (see'-mong). We worked together at a decorator's. I was at

the beginning of my career, earning six francs a day. Our models were leaves and flowers which we picked in the garden. I was carving a capital when Constant Simon said to me: 'You don't go about that correctly. You make all your leaves flatwise. Turn them, on the contrary, with the tips facing you. Execute them in *depth* and not in *relief*. Always work in that manner, so that a *surface will never seem other than the termination of a mass*. Only thus can you achieve success in sculpture.' I understood at once. Since then I have discovered other things; but that rule has remained my absolute basis. Constant Simon was only an obscure workman, but he possessed the principles and a little of the genius of the great ornamentists who worked at the *Château* on the Loire (lwahr). On the St. Michel (sang mee-shell) fountain in Paris there are very beautifully carved decorations, rich and graceful, made by the hands of this little modeler who knew much more than the professors of art."

Here, then, is one of Rodin's theories—the *modeling* in depth instead of in the *flat*, producing the great effect of depression and projection and the roundness of form. Then we must note Rodin's great sense of proportion; then, his instinctive feeling for a beautiful *undulating* line, which he studied and sought for all his life in the works of antiquity and in nature's handiwork; then, his knowledge of perfect *balance* and the laws of motion, resulting in what he himself calls "the charm of balance"; then comes his marvelous drawing; then his knowledge of planes, through which the great oppositions of light and shadow are obtained; and then his great feeling for *light* and his knowledge of how to make light an aid in producing the effect he desired in his compositions.

On these points Rodin pondered all his life, and with observations on these points his note-books and writings are filled. For instance, Rodin exclaims: "What is modeling? The very principle of creation. It is the juxtaposition of the innumerable reliefs and depressions that constitute every fragment of matter, inert or animated. Modeling creates the supple liv-

ing flesh. It produces everything, it animates everything, the *depth* as well as the *surface*. Modeling takes in the minute as well as the great. Mountain, horse, flower, woman and insect owe their form to modeling. When God created the world, he must have thought of modeling first of all. When you examine a hand you notice its contour and then the character of the whole. The eye of the artist sees more: it notes the infinite assemblage of projections and depressions forming a composition more closely knit and more wonderfully blended than the most perfect mosaic. If the artist is a sculptor, he tries to render this by the science of depression and relief; if he is a draughtsman or painter, by the science of light and shadow. For light plays in its union with depressions and relief the same part as the painter's brush. Titian (tish'-an) is as great a modeler as Donatello.

"Today the feeling for the round relief is completely lost. It is the age of the *flat*. Men love what they do themselves until they are made to see that it is not beautiful; but it takes years and years for this to reach their consciousness. In our own time the pest of flatness has contaminated the Asiatic races as well as the European; the decadence is universal.

"We are so far removed from antique beauty that when we copy the works of the ancients we take them in the spirit of our own taste, which is that of low-relief. We take from them the beautiful modeling which is their richness, their crowning grace. When I say low-relief, I do not mean the term exactly, but there is no other way of expressing the modern evil of uniformity. Good low-relief is as full and fruit-like as sculpture in the round, and it often is—as in the friezes of the Parthenon and our buildings of the Renaissance and of the seventeenth century—sculpture in the round itself.

"The great struggle of my life has been to escape from the general flatness. All the success of my sculpture comes from the fact that the public is tired to death of this everlasting flatness. The charm of the round is so great that it captivates even the ignorant without their knowing it."

COURTESY OF THE CENTURY CO., N. Y.

LA PENSÉE (CONTEMPLATION.) BY RODIN

"Man, animals down to the smallest insects, down to the infinitesimal, the earth, the waters, the woods, the sky—all are marvelous. The firmament is the vastest landscape, the most profound, the most enchanting, with its variations, its effects of color and light, which delight the eye, astonish the thought and subjugate the heart."—*Auguste Rodin*.

WHAT are Rodin's greatest works? A hard question to answer, for the list of this indefatigable sculptor's accomplishments is enormous. Power, might and stupendous technique are expressed in everything his hand touched. The "Man with the Broken Nose," because of its history, already related, and the daring novelty of its

subject, often stands first in the category. Next to it critics usually place "The Bronze Age," or "The Man Who Awakens to Nature," also described by M. Villemain in this number of *The Mentor*.

Rodin's greatest period began about 1888, when the fascinating portrait bust of Madame Morla Vicunha appeared—the very woman herself, which, as a critic has well said, "in its enigmatic grace will become more and more the expression of the woman who loves, just as Mona Lisa* is the expression of the woman who is loved. This bust will live. How beautiful the head is in its firm delicacy! The face, tortured by the longing for intimate expression, reveals a being with whom happiness borders very closely upon sorrow. The nostrils tremble as if to the perfume of the flowers pressed against the warm bosom. The mouth is mobile and firm at the same time—and all the features of the face converge towards it—towards the kiss, which causes it to swell softly. The light steals gently into every line and fold of the face. It is as if the sculptor and the light had begun a dialogue together—a dialogue kept up with endless graces and coqueries."

The best known, and perhaps the most impressive, of Rodin's works is the figure of "The Thinker," which is reproduced herewith. This great figure sits in bronze in front of the Panthéon in Paris.

La Pensée (Contemplation) is another striking study of a woman. Only a head, strangely issuing from a block of marble and leaning slightly forward, with brow and eyes the dominant features! The sculptor has placed a peasant cap on the hair and concentrates the light on the face.

Of an entirely different character is "The Village Fiancée"—the little bride with downcast eyes, and wearing a much beribboned cap! What a masterpiece of modeling, expression, and marvelous capture of light and shade!

Of still another quality is "Minerva," whose serious, inscrutable and handsome face is shaded by her helmet. How quiet, how calm, how in the spirit of Phidias, and yet how intensely modern!

The famous "Portrait Bust of Victor Hugo" dates from 1884. Rodin finished it in three months, after having made

innumerable sketches. The "Statue of Victor Hugo," now in the garden of the Palais Royal, Paris, was made ten years later, and represents the poet, nude under the folds of a great cloak, and seated on a rock as if by the seashore, with the head bowed in meditation. It was intended for the Panthéon, but the executive staff, appalled by its unconventionality, refused it. Still more unconventional is "Balzac." This statue mystified everyone when it was exhibited at the Salon in 1898. Newspapers and magazines discussed it the world over. The work had been ordered by the *Société des Gens des Lettres*. They would not have it, so Rodin took it to Meudon and placed it in the garden, where its strange power attracted sculptors, artists and men of letters, who gradually began to comprehend the phantom in stone of the great French novelist,—the greatest creator of characters since Shakespeare. The body of this colossus "with crossed arms is braced against the earth with the tension of his whole will, and draped in the monk's robe in which the writer used to wrap himself when at work."

In "The Burghers of Calais" Rodin found a sympathetic theme—the six martyrs who sacrificed themselves to Edward III of England to save Calais. One statue had been ordered: Rodin made six for the price of one! He gained his knowledge from Froissart, the graphic chronicler of the fourteenth century, and he followed the traditions of the old French Gothic sculptors.

Mythological subjects naturally were dear to so great a lover of antiquity and nature: they are always treated with a poetic feeling that communicates itself to the spectator. Many were his fanciful works—such as "The Poet and the Muse," the "Inner Voice," the bust of "The Tempest," and the allegories of the "Seasons" for the home of Baron Vitta (the Villa of Evian), four sleeping women, whose mysterious slumber evokes the phases of the year—spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Of these it has been said that "not since the beautiful Greek epoch has marble assumed such living sweetness from any human hand."

(Leonardo da Vinci's famous portrait in the Louvre.)

In the Cowboy Country

I LIVE in the mountains of Arizona, in a region of scattered "cow-ranches," and I think I am the only one here that takes *The Mentor*, so I have started a Mentor Library.

A cowboy came one day to borrow a book, and I lent him three copies of *The Mentor*, with strict injunctions to return them. He did in a few days, but brought another cowboy with him, who wished to borrow them. Then it was that the idea came to me how much good these men of the big spaces, spending so much time alone, could gather from my Mentors. The first copies are showing their good service, with turned corners, and worn covers. The pictures are not so clean and bright, but they have left clean, bright pictures in the minds of the half-schooled, eager men of the range.

I mean to keep all copies and bind them, that my children may use them for reference in their school work later on.

MRS. C. M. BROWN

Roosevelt, Arizona.

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The railroads are in an unprecedented condition of congestion, and the mail trains, carrying second-class matter, are from two to eight days late in arriving at their destinations.

If you do not receive your copy of The Mentor on the day it is due, please do not take it for granted that you have been neglected. Your copy is probably being held up somewhere along the line. Wait a few days before you write us; it will save us both a great deal of trouble, and your copy will probably be delivered to you before we can reply to your letter.

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